

Male Circumcision: Weighing the Benefits and Risks

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ABSTRACT

Circumcision is a widely practiced surgical procedure in males, with both advantages and disadvantages. This article provides an evidence-based overview of the clinical benefits and risks associated with male circumcision. The advantages include protection against HIV infection, penile carcinoma, urinary tract infections, and sexually transmitted infections. However, there are also potential disadvantages and ethical considerations, such as the risk of complications associated with the procedure and the debate surrounding the infringement of individual autonomy. It is essential to weigh the potential benefits against the risks when making an informed decision about male circumcision.

Keywords: Male Circumcision; Health Benefits; Risks; Ethical Considerations; Aftercare; Recovery.

1. Introduction

Male circumcision is the surgical removal of the foreskin from the penis. It is a procedure that is performed for various reasons, including religious, cultural, and medical purposes. The practice has been a subject of debate due to its potential health benefits and associated risks. This article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the advantages and disadvantages of male circumcision based on current evidence and research [8]. It is a common procedure performed for various reasons, including religious, cultural, and medical purposes. Most circumcisions are done during the first 10 days of a baby's life, often within the first 48 hours. The procedure involves the following steps:

Preparation: The penis and foreskin are cleaned.

Anesthesia: An anesthetic is administered to reduce pain. This can be in the form of an injection or a topical cream eg., lignocaine.

Removal: A special clamp or plastic ring is attached to the penis, and the foreskin is cut and removed.

Aftercare: After the procedure, the penis is covered with an ointment, such as a topical antibiotic or petroleum jelly, and wrapped loosely with gauze. The entire procedure generally takes about 10 minutes for newborns [13].

For older boys and men:

The procedure is similar but might require general anaesthesia, and the recovery period may be longer with a greater risk of complications. Circumcision is also performed for medical reasons, such as when the foreskin is too tight to be pulled back (retracted) over the glands or to treat certain diseases like recurrent urinary tract infections or pathological phimosis. While circumcision may offer health benefits, such as easier hygiene and a lower risk of certain diseases like urinary tract infections. The recovery process after circumcision usually takes around 10 days for the penis to heal [10]. After the procedure, the penis is covered with an ointment, such as a topical antibiotic or petroleum jelly, and wrapped loosely with gauze. The patient will be advised about their recovery at home,

including when they can drive, return to work, and have sex. It is recommended to take at least one week off work to recover. Patients should avoid having sex for at least 4 weeks after the operation. The bandage should be removed after 24 hours, and the stitches will dissolve themselves in 3-4 weeks [12].

Patients should keep the area clean and avoid using diaper wipes. If there are any signs of infection, such as fever, redness, or discharge, patients should seek medical attention. It is important to follow the aftercare instructions provided by the healthcare provider to ensure proper healing and minimize the risk of complications [14].

1.1. Study Objectives

To provide an overview of the advantages and disadvantages of male circumcision based on current evidence and research.

To discuss the potential health benefits of male circumcision, including protection against HIV, penile carcinoma, urinary tract infections, and sexually transmitted infections [1].

To examine the potential risks and disadvantages of male circumcision, such as surgical complications and ethical considerations.

To discuss the common side effects and complications after circumcision [2].

1.2. Advantages of Male Circumcision

Several studies have demonstrated the health benefits of male circumcision. Research indicates that circumcision can protect males from various health conditions, including:

HIV Infection: There is substantial evidence that male circumcision reduces the risk of HIV infection [3].

Penile Carcinoma: Circumcision has been associated with a decreased risk of penile carcinoma [9].

Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs): Circumcision has been shown to reduce the risk of UTIs in males.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs): Male circumcision has been linked to a lower risk of ulcerative STIs [11].

These findings suggest that male circumcision may offer significant health benefits in terms of disease prevention.

1.3. Disadvantages of Male Circumcision

Despite the potential advantages, male circumcision is associated with certain risks and disadvantages, including:

Surgical Complications: The procedure has a risk of surgical complications, like bleeding and infection [2,9,11].

Ethical Considerations: There is an ongoing ethical debate regarding the infringement of individual autonomy and the right to make an informed decision about circumcision [15].

It is important to consider these potential disadvantages when evaluating the need for male circumcision.

1.4. Common Side Effects After Circumcision

Some common side effects after circumcision include bleeding, pain, swelling, and infection at the site of the circumcision.

Other possible complications of circumcision can include tenderness around the scar, irritation of the glans, and a permanent reduction in sensation in the head of the penis, particularly during sex [5].

In rare cases, circumcision might result in foreskin problems, such as the foreskin being cut too short or too long, or failing to heal properly. Post-circumcision bleeding in patients with coagulation disorders can be significant and sometimes requires surgical correction.

It is important to follow the aftercare instructions provided by the healthcare provider to ensure proper healing and minimize the risk of complications. If there are any signs of infection, such as fever, redness, or discharge, patients should seek medical attention [2].

2. Discussions

Male circumcision is a widely practiced surgical procedure with both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include protection against HIV infection, penile carcinoma, urinary tract infections, and sexually transmitted infections. However, there are also potential disadvantages and ethical considerations, such as the risk of complications associated with the procedure and the debate surrounding the infringement of individual autonomy. It is essential to weigh the potential benefits against the risks when making an informed decision about male circumcision [5].

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, male circumcision has both advantages and disadvantages. While it may offer health benefits such as protection against HIV, penile carcinoma, UTIs, and STIs, it is essential to carefully consider the potential risks and ethical implications associated with the procedure [8]. Ultimately, the decision to undergo male circumcision should be based on a thorough understanding of the available evidence, individual health considerations, and respect for autonomy [12].

3.1. Future Directions

Future research should focus on developing more effective and less invasive methods for male circumcision, as well as addressing the ethical concerns surrounding the procedure. Additionally, further studies are needed to determine the long-term effects of male circumcision on sexual function and overall health [9].

Declarations

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This study has not received any funds from any organization.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Consent for Publication

The authors declare that they consented to the publication of this study.

Authors' Contribution

Both authors contributed equally to this study.

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